FROM FIELD AND STUDY

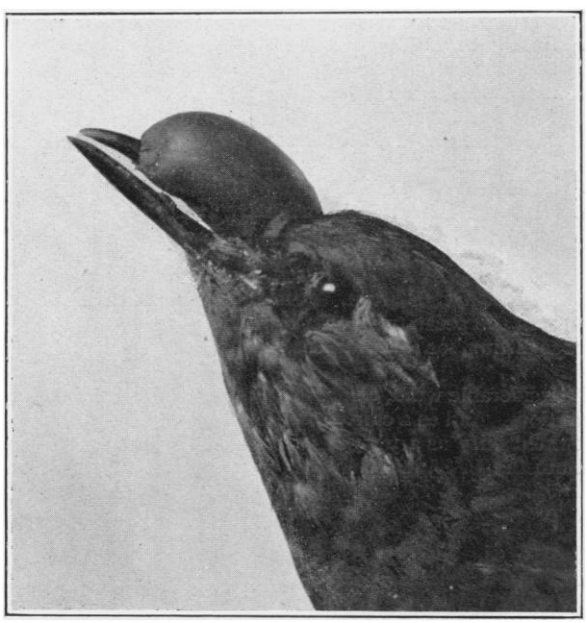
Dates that are not Data.—Possibly no idiosyncrasy of the collector causes more trouble than the habit of abbreviating dates on labels, for instance 1. 2. 07, or better still, 1 | 2 | 07. Does this mean January 2nd, 1907? In some cases it does; but it may mean February 1st, 1907, and the only way for the unfortunate ornithologist to guess the meaning is to have skins from the same collector having the day higher than twelve, thus 13. 2. 07. Even this is not certainty; for the collector sometimes changes his formula and it requires an expert in plumage cycles to decide which is which.

There are variations to this that once understood are not so confusing; 1. II. 07 means February 1st, 1907, but how about 19. 1-11. 00? This is happily confined to Russian collectors as far as I know and I think should read November 1st, 1900, but whether old style or new style is not for me to say.

Moral: Write the month plainly in letters of ink that fade not, forgetting not the day and year of reckoning.—J. H. FLEMING, *Toronto, Ontario.*

Destruction of Imperial Woodpeckers.—Recently there came to my knowledge facts relative to a deplorable slaughter of the Imperial Woodpecker (*Campephilus imperialis*), not so very far south of our border.

Two prospectors (one of whom imparted the information given herewith) were working over a region in west central Chihuahua, some fifty miles west of Terrazas (pueblo), a mountainous and heavily forested country, much frequented by the bird in subject. One of the men had heard somewhere of the rarity of the species, and that it bore a commercial value, but, erroneously, his conception was that the bill was the portion in demand, and not the prepared skin. Working on this idea he shot some seventeen of the magnificent creatures in the course of a few months, and cut off the bills, figuring them at $25.00 each, until, on reaching civilization again, he was chagrined to find his material utterly worthless.—AUSTIN PAUL SMITH, *Benson, Arizona.*



VARIED THRUSH KILLED BY ACORN WEDGED UPON THE BILL

A Curious Bird Tragedy.—A male specimen of the Varied Thrush (*Ixoreus nævius*) which had met death in an unusual manner came into my possession some time ago. It was found by my brother beneath a California live oak after a spell of rainy weather. As the accompanying illustration shows, a portion of an acorn shell was wedged upon the tip of the upper mandible, in such a way that it pressed firmly against the crown. Upon skinning the specimen, severe skull injuries were found, caused by the bird in its endeavor to remove the acorn.

The bird probably forced the acorn upon its bill while digging for insects among the leaves. It was in good condition, proving that death came before starvation could emaciate its body.—CHARLES H. RICHARDSON, JR., *Pasadena, California.*

A Vermillion Flycatcher in Los Angeles County, California.—I desire to record the taking of a Vermillion Flycatcher (*Pyrocephalus rubineus mexicanus*), male, at El Monte, California, February 8, 1908. It was taken in the willow-bottom about a mile from that town. The bird was not shy and acted about the same as any other bird of this family.—HOWARD W WRIGHT, *Pasadena, California.*

Junco hyemalis hyemalis.—While collecting in the hills back of Palo Alto, California, on November 24, 1907, two specimens of *Junco h. hyemalis* were procured from an unusually large flock of Juncos. By following the birds from tree to tree across an orchard I was able to identify three more of these Eastern Juncos from the majority of the flock which were *Junco h. pinosus.* I have often looked for these rare winter visitors, but these two are the first I have ever been able to collect. The specimens are indistinguishable from specimens of *Junco h. hyemalis* from Wisconsin.—J. R. PEMBERTON, *Palo Alto, California.*

Brain Parasite in White-necked Raven.—During a tramp about the foothills of the Whetstone Mountains, Arizona, May 25, 1907, my attention was directed to a White-necked Raven (*Corvus cryptoleucus*) some forty feet overhead, by its strange circular flight and gyrating movements. No birds of its kind were in sight at the time, and its indifference to my presence also surprised me; so after some moments of observation, I brought it to the ground with a charge of buck-shot.

In skinning the bird, close examination was paid to the brain-case and orbital region, and I was rewarded by finding, directly back of the eyes, and extending partly into the brain, a parasite more than an inch in length, about the thickness of wrapping twine, pale yellow in color. The parasite showed considerable activity for an hour or more, when immersed in water.

The bird's sight may or may not have been impaired, tho cursory notice of the eyes, after being wounded, and before it expired, showed nothing unusual. Notwithstanding its size, the parasite must have been of recent date, with rapid growth, as the bird was an adult ♂, and it would seem unlikely that any animal in the fierce struggle for survival in nature, could exist for a year or more in a defective mental state, as this bird's actions would clearly indicate.—AUSTIN PAUL SMITH, *Benson, Arizona.*

Goonies of the Desert.—Those of us who have undertaken voyages across the ocean will readily recall the almost constant presence of goonies, or albatrosses, which fly along in the wake of the boat closely scrutinizing the sea surface for any sort of refuse that may serve them as food. In crossing the deserts of New Mexico, Arizona, and southern California recently, I noticed a similar habit on the part of the ravens. As I sat on the observation platform at the rear of the train, I repeatedly saw these goonies of the desert fall in behind the train, following along above the track evidently on the lookout for scraps thrown from the diner. The birds were nearly always in pairs. In case the grade was heavy, as is the climb up to San Gorgonio Pass out of the Salton Sink, the ravens could easily keep up with the train, even when they now and then alighted to investigate something of suspected interest. Elsewhere the birds were easily distanced by the train. We can infer that these scavengers regularly follow the trains back and forth across the desert, securing a substantial addition to their primitive food supply.—J. GRINNELL, *Pasadena, California.*

The Blackburnian Warbler Noted at Ft. Brown, Texas, December 21, 1907.—A single bird observed for several minutes in the pecan trees that line the drill ground. As it came within a dozen feet of where I was sitting, on several occasions, all doubt as to identity was precluded. Probably a ♂ adult.

Heavy fogs, with some rain and considerable wind, characterized the two preceding days, as well as the morning of the day in question. And as a careful search disclosed no other of the species or genus, it can probably be counted only as a tempest-tossed individual adding a very late date to the autumnal migration, within the U. S., of *Dendroica blackburniæ.*—AUSTIN PAUL SMITH, *Benson, Arizona.*

How Large a Bird Can the California Shrike Kill?—On February 6, 1906, I witnessed a California Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus gambeli*) overtake and kill a female Golden-crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia coronata*). The sparrow was pursued in the open, but the shrike gradually gained on it, forcing it to seek the protection of a thick bush. Here again, the sparrow employed all its faculties to elude its pursuer, but was finally overtaken and killed.

On examination of the victim, the skin of the neck was found to be cut and the vertebra broken. The shrike was shot and proved to be a female. I have known shrikes to kill birds the size of a Western Chipping Sparrow, but never any as large as *Zonotrichia coronata.* It would be of interest to know how large a bird the California Shrike can kill.—CHARLES H. RICHARDSON, JR., *Pasadena, California.*

The Red-winged Blackbirds of Colorado.—Following the suggestion of Prof. W. W. Cooke of the U. S. Biological Survey, the writer undertook to collect a series of *Agelaius* thruout the fall and early winter, for the purpose of ascertaining definitely what form occurred in the vicinity of Denver during the winter.

With the assistance of Mr. L. J. Hersey of Denver, and Messrs Wm. and George Richards of Littleton, twelve birds were secured, at intervals of about one week. These were forwarded to the Survey and identified by Mr. Oberholser. Six of the birds were classed as *A. p. fortis*, the prevalent breeding bird in this section, while the remaining six were classed as *A. p. neutralis*, the Great Basin form. So far as I know *neutralis* has not been definitely recorded for Colorado before.

The addition of *neutralis* to the Red-wings of Colorado, makes four forms of *Agelaius* found within the State: the typical form (*phœniceus*), *fortis*, *arctolegus*, and *neutralis*. Just what ranges, seasons, etc., these different forms occupy can only be definitely determined by exhaustive field work, and should furnish a very interesting line of work to the field collectors of the State.

The following table does not seem to point to any positive conclusion, but it is probable that *neutralis* is generally found in this section after the bulk of *fortis* has gone south.

No.	Date	Locality	Collector	Form
1	Oct. 5	Barr	Hersey	*fortis*
2	" 13	Littleton	Richards	*neutralis*
3	" 20	"	"	*fortis*
4	" 30	"	"	"
5	Nov. 2	Barr	Hersey	"
6	" 6	Littleton	Richards	"
7	" 12	"	"	*neutralis*
8	" 20	"	"	"
9	" 27	"	"	*fortis*
10	" 28	Barr	Hersey	*neutralis*
11	Dec. 3	Littleton	Richards	"
12	" 10	"	"	"

Littleton is located ten miles due south of Denver, while Barr is eighteen miles northeast.—ROBERT B. ROCKWELL, *Denver, Colorado.*

A Death Struggle —January 18, while collecting at Newhall, California, I wounded a Lewis Woodpecker. The bird was able to fly to another tree, and I noticed that some California Woodpeckers in a nearby tree became very much excited. As the Lewis Woodpecker lit on the tree trunk four California Woodpeckers attacked him evidently with the intent of driving him off. The Lewis started for another tree but a California flew at him from in front, and they both fell in the struggle that ensued. At this the other California Woodpeckers, which were joined by a few more, set up a violent chattering and when I ran up, to my amazement I found that the Lewis had hold of the California by the skull, two of its claws entering the latter's eyes and the other two entering the skull in front and behind ! The Lewis Woodpecker was dead and the California so nearly so that it died while I was removing the former's claws.—HOWARD W. WRIGHT, *Pasadena, California.*

Albinism of Scaled Partridge.—A Scaled Partridge (*Callipepla squamata*) was brought to me November 19, 1907, by an acquaintance, who had shot it in the San Pedro valley, a few miles below Benson. The bird was an excellent example of semi-albinism. It was an adult female and had the dark edgings of the feathers, that give the species the scaled appearance in normal plumage, reduced to a minimum by a change of color. Most noticeable tho was the lack of white streaks on each side of the back, so conspicuous in the ordinary bird. The crest also was lighter than usual.

Sometime in September of the same year, Mr. O. had casually mentioned to me about wounding a "white quail," that he was unable to secure. This had slipped my mind, however; so when he handed me the specimen in subject, and remarked that he thought he had bagged his albino, it took me a few minutes to recall the incident. An ulcerated condition of the forejoint of one wing, apparent in preparing the skin, together with the fact that he had killed the bird in the same locality as the one that had escaped, would lend substance to his opinion.—AUSTIN PAUL SMITH, *Benson, Arizona.*

San Geronimo Notes.—While having a sort of *home outing*, as it were, among the firs on the back ranges of our ranch in the middle of September, 1906, with my brother, we noticed a number of Townsend Warblers (*Dendroica townsendi*), and found that quite a flock would come to feed around our camp. Several specimens were taken. These warblers often have been noted, and specimens taken, in winter and spring at San Geronimo, but all these heretofore have appeared to be single stragglers or occasional visitants. On this occasion, however, it would seem to appear as if the line of fall migration had spread out toward the coast in our locality.

On October 17, the first Yellow-headed Blackbirds (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*) I have ever seen or heard of in Marin County were noted flying down the San Geronimo Valley. They came close enough for me to see that they were either young males, or adult males already in winter plumage. There is no reason why these birds should not cross thru our district, but the fact remains that they do not do so, save on rare occasions.

On October 28, 1906, the second Saw-whet Owl (*Cryptoglaux acadica*) was seen. I endeavored to add him to our collection by means of a stone, in the absence of other weapons, but my accuracy in this line seems to have lost something in the last thirty or forty years and he escaped, by a miracle (?).

A Rock Wren (*Salpinctes obsoletus*) spent the winter of 1906–7 with us, living among the rocks in a fill on the new railroad cut-off near our house. This little fellow became quite tame and would let me approach to within a few feet of him before taking flight. I was in hopes that he would find a mate and breed there, and so make a new breeding record for this valley; but in early spring he took his departure and did not return last fall. This species has only been noted as a straggler before this.

Another specimen of White-throated Sparrow (*Zonotrichia albicollis*), a female, was taken here on Dec. 11, 1907, and another of this species seen. California records of this bird are becoming quite numerous. It must either have a poor bump of direction, or be somewhat absent-minded when migrating.—JOSEPH MAILLIARD, *San Francisco, California.*

Catalina Quail.—Thru the courtesy of Mr. Howard Wright, of Pasadena, I have had the privilege of closely examining 16 more specimens of the Catalina Island Quail. Of these, ten are males and six females. They were taken at Middle Ranch, Santa Catalina Island, February 1 to 4, 1908. The series bears out precisely the characters assigned to *Lophortyx catalinensis* in the original description of that form, which was based on six skins from Avalon. (See *Auk* XXIII, July 1906, pages 262–265.) When compared with a series of the mainland *vallicola* the island birds are distinguished by larger size, especially of the feet, broadness of terminal barring on the posterior lower surface, and broadness of shaft-streaks on lower tail-coverts and flanks. An additional character which shows up in the larger series is the averaging more intense and extensive chestnut patch on the hind chest, in the male, of course. This does not seem to be due to the different "make" of the skins. An examination of individual variation in the two series shows that any one character alone is not diagnostic of every single individual. For instance, a small-footed island bird can be duplicated in that respect by an extra large-footed mainland bird. But at the same time the barring and streaking of the former renders it easily recognizable. Then in the matter of barring on the lower surface, a mainland female appears as heavily marked as the average island female. But at the same time the former has a decidedly shorter wing and weaker foot. It is therefore evident that there is a mergence of separate characters thru individual variation; and according to the criterion now apparently most popular, the island form would be given a trinomial appellation. The binomial, however, appears to me most useful, as it signifies complete isolation because of the intervention of a barrier.—J. GRINNELL, *Pasadena, California.*

The Mountain Bluebird in Northern Arizona.—The suggestion of Austin Paul Smith on page 50 of January CONDOR that the presence of *Sialia arctica* at Flagstaff, Arizona, in late February and early March might indicate that they are residents, hardly warrants that inference. The species reaches northern Colorado at about that time regularly in spring migration, spreading rapidly along the foothills at about the altitude of Flagstaff and reaching timberline (11,000 feet) by the last of March. They have been known to reach an altitude of 9,000 feet as early as February 23. Hence the Arizona record is not evidence one way or the other as to residence. However, for other reasons, some ornithologists suspect that in this latitude some few of the birds may remain in the mountains thru the winter, as in case of the robins.—JUNIUS HENDERSON, *Boulder, Colorado.*